

Coins

Not a cent or a dime, but its value is estimated at \$200

By Roger Boye

NOTES AND QUOTES about the world's greatest hobby:

● A supermarket cashier in Pittsburgh has found a weird (but valuable) 1980 coin that looks like both a penny and a dime.

Experts believe that mint workers created the "cent-dime" when they dropped some freshly produced Roosevelt dimes into a box filled with copper blanks or "slugs."

Machines later struck each copper blank—and, by accident, the dimes—with Abraham Lincoln's portrait to create 1980 Lincoln cents.

The Pittsburgh woman's piece is worth at least \$200, according to a report in Numismatic News.

● Amid continued gripes from collectors, a government executive has strongly defended last February's sale of 923,000 Carson City silver dollars.

"I'm just sorry we didn't have the more than 5 million coins necessary to satisfy the demand

of the American people," said Roy Markon of the General Services Administration, the government agency that conducted the sale. "I think the sale was one of the first ever run by the GSA."

The government received 350,000 orders during the first 12 sale days—nearly double the number expected—and 50,000 more orders came in after officials declared a sellout. As many as 200,000 persons received no coins, and some of them had to wait four or more months to get their money back.

Markon contends that the spiraling price of silver early this year prompted many people to mail in orders.

"Stories about the silver market were suddenly front-page news and lead stories on newscasts. The American public was very silver-conscious," he said.

When the GSA announced marketing plans last November, Markon said he thought then that not all the coins would sell.

● Mint bosses say they are behind schedule in mailing 1980 proof sets to collectors, the

result of delays in receiving plastic cases for sets from a supplier.

But they promise to "pull out all stops" to fill orders for all 3.5 million sets by the Dec. 31 mailing deadline.

The mint accepted proof set orders between April 1 and May 9.

● Earlier this century, state governments in India produced rectangular-shaped silver coins, China made circular coins with square holes in the middle, and the Bahamas minted huge gold pieces weighing nearly a pound.

Those are just a few tidbits from the newest edition of Standard Catalog of World Coins, by Chester L. Krause and Clifford Mishler, one of the hobby's most impressive references.

The 1981 (seventh) edition lists the current retail prices for nearly every coin minted in the world since the 1760s—an astounding 72,000 types of coins from more than 1,300 countries or local governments.

The 2,000-page catalog—as large as the Chicago phone book—is sold at many coin stores for \$29.50 or may be ordered from the

publisher, Krause Publications Inc. (700 E. State St., Iola, Wis. 54945). It's a one-stop coin library and well worth the cost.

● Invest in rare coins that are in "extremely fine" or "almost uncirculated" condition, rather than "choice uncirculated" pieces.

That's the advice of numismatic scholar Q. David Bowers in the newest (seventh) edition of his book, "High Profits from Rare Coin Investment."

In earlier editions, Bowers recommended buying coins in the best condition possible. But prices for "choice uncirculated" coins have increased so much in the last two years that rare coins in the lesser condition categories are bargains by comparison, Bowers contends.

The 185-page book is loaded with tips for the would-be coin investor. To order a copy, visit a local coin store or send \$7.95 to Bowers and Ruddy Galleries, Suite 600-NR, 6922 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90028.

Questions about old coins or currency? Send them to Roger Boye, Arts & Fun, Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Av., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want a personal reply.